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Prokritee's Strategy for Participation and Success

Prokritee is a powerful Fair-Trade organization in Bangladesh focused on empowering marginalized rural communities through sustainable handicrafts. While job creation prioritizes disadvantaged women, their success depends on a highly participatory model that benefits all stakeholders—artisans, staff, and their families.

How Prokritee Engages and Inspires Participation

Prokritee ensures that its workforce and community members are active, skilled, and integral to the business process.

1. **Comprehensive Skills and Technical Training:** The organization provides extensive training in both traditional handicrafts (like weaving, natural dyeing, and jute work) and modern, market-relevant skills (like paper-making from recycled materials and natural soap production). This skills development increases the economic value of all producers and staff.
2. **Holistic Life and Social Support:** For highly vulnerable groups, such as those at the Sacred Mark Enterprise (supporting survivors of the sex trade), the support is holistic, offering counseling and rehabilitation alongside craft training. This addresses social trauma and facilitates the complete transformation and reintegration of these individuals into society, impacting their whole family unit.
3. **Participatory Governance and Producer Committees:** Engagement is formalized through a Producer Management Committee (PMC) at each of the ten production units. These committees ensure that artisans—primarily women—are involved in operational decision-making, fostering a sense of ownership and accountability among the producers.
4. **Open Dialogue and Transparent Communication:** Prokritee maintains a flat organizational structure and ensures that Executive Directors hold regular

direct meetings with artisans and staff. This culture of transparency ensures everyone's voice is heard on critical issues, from product pricing to working conditions, promoting a high level of trust across the organization.

5. **Digital and Market Literacy Capacity Building:** Prokritee actively bridges the digital divide by implementing projects that bring Internet connectivity and technology training to remote artisan communities. This training empowers producers to communicate directly with designers and marketing channels, giving them greater understanding and control over the global supply chain.
6. **Fair and Inclusive Employment Practices:** The organization is committed to the Fair-Trade principle of non-discrimination. It actively promotes equal pay for equal work by women and men and provides opportunities for individuals of different backgrounds (e.g., indigenous groups) to apply their skills, ensuring its ethical standards cover its entire workforce, including the administrative staff and management (which includes men).

The Solutions and Actions They Promote

Prokritee drives deep social, economic, and environmental change in the communities where its artisans and staff live.

1. **Targeted Employment for Economic Stability:** The core solution is to provide steady, productive employment that directly targets the poorest segments of the rural population, including women who are heads-of-households (such as widows or divorcees) who have few other income alternatives. This income, in turn, stabilizes the entire family.
2. **Ensuring Fair Compensation and Benefits:** As a WFTO Guaranteed Member, Prokritee ensures fair wages (agreed upon through dialogue) and provides critical non-wage benefits like health care, retirement contributions, and annual bonuses to all employees and producers.
3. **Closed-Loop Resource Management and Recycling:** Prokritee is committed to environmental sustainability by emphasizing recycled and waste materials. They actively source and use discarded materials—like cotton from the garment industry, waste jute, and recycled sari fabrics—to minimize their ecological footprint and transform waste into valuable products.
4. **Preservation of Traditional and Indigenous Crafts:** They promote and purchase products made with indigenous, sustainable materials (jute, hemp, water hyacinth) and actively support the craft of specific, often marginalized,

ethnic communities, ensuring their cultural heritage is preserved and provides a source of income.

5. **Reinvestment in Community Development:** Since Prokritee is a non-profit company, any financial surplus is reinvested back into the organization and the surrounding communities. This funding goes toward community development projects, as well as capital investments in new training and product development.
6. **Market Development for Wider Outreach:** Prokritee's actions go beyond production by actively creating market opportunities for the wider Fair Trade sector. They organize the monthly "DhakaCraft Bazaar" and run local sales outlets, which helps smaller local craft groups promote their products and grow the domestic Fair Trade movement.

How Prokritee Measures Success and Impact

Prokritee tracks success using a comprehensive "triple bottom line" approach that prioritizes social development and environmental stewardship.

1. **Measuring Economic and Financial Progress (Quantitative):** Success is measured by consistent organizational growth, tracking overall sales and export income as well as the documented increase in the average monthly income of artisan communities. This financial stability allows families to make major investments like purchasing land and building secure housing.
2. **Tracking Generational Change (Educational Metric):** The key social metric is the direct impact on the artisan's children. Prokritee measures and documents how the reliable income allows parents to send their children (both boys and girls) to school, often resulting in a higher level of education than their parents, thus breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty.
3. **Documenting Qualitative Empowerment (Personal Stories):** Prokritee actively collects and shares personal success stories from artisans. These stories measure intangible yet powerful impacts, such as women gaining **increased respect** and authority within their households and communities, or achieving personal goals like sending a son to university.
4. **Adherence to Global Ethical Standards (WFTO Certification):** Maintaining its status as a WFTO Guaranteed Member is a continuous external audit of success, validating that the organization consistently meets international standards for transparency, ethical sourcing, fair wages, and a safe, non-discriminatory workplace for all employees.

5. **Organizational and Producer Growth Targets:** Prokritee sets internal benchmarks for expansion, tracking its success by the rate at which it increases the number of artisan producers it supports (aiming for growth targets like 5%) and the consistent implementation of planned wage increases (e.g., a 10% annual rise).
 6. **Environmental Stewardship Metrics:** Success is measured through its commitment to sustainability, tracked by the quantity of recycled and indigenous materials utilized in its production. Additionally, success is acknowledged externally, as shown by Prokritee winning the WFTO Mohammed Islam Design Award for a product made from water hyacinth handmade paper.
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Strategies for Financial and Organizational Resilience

1. Market and Product Diversification

To avoid reliance on a single product or buyer, Prokritee actively diversifies its offerings and sales channels.

- **Broad Product Portfolio:** It offers a wide array of handicrafts, ranging from home décor (baskets, lampshades) and fashion accessories (jewelry, bags) to specialized items (natural soaps, handmade paper). This variety allows the organization to absorb demand shifts in any single category.
- **Utilizing Diverse Raw Materials:** Prokritee reduces supply chain risks by using over 20 different natural and recycled materials (jute, hemp, recycled sari, water hyacinth, terracotta, etc.). This commitment to local, renewable materials provides material security and enables continuous product innovation.
- **Multiple Export Markets:** The organization exports to a large number of Fair Trade and mainstream buyers across America, Asia, Europe, and Australia, ensuring that fluctuations in a single country's economy don't destabilize the entire business.
- **Developing the Domestic Market:** Recognizing the vulnerability of relying solely on exports, Prokritee is expanding its local market presence through its retail outlet, SOURCE, and by organizing the "DhakaCraft Bazaar." This balances its foreign currency earnings with a robust local sales base.

2. Internal Capacity and Governance

Prokritee invests in its people and structure to ensure operational efficiency and self-sufficiency.

- **Unit-Based Autonomy:** The organization **manages ten distinct production units**, each supervised by a local unit manager and a Producer Management Committee (PMC). This decentralized structure fosters local ownership, accountability, and the ability to quickly adapt to local challenges without depending solely on the central Dhaka office.
- **Continuous Design and Trend Integration:** Prokritee employs a design and development department that constantly monitors buyer trends to create new, market-relevant products. This professional design support, combined with artisan input, is crucial for maintaining competitive appeal in the global market.
- **Investment in Digital Technology:** Recent initiatives focus on providing Internet connectivity and digital literacy training to remote artisan groups. This allows for real-time communication with designers and marketing teams, improving order accuracy, efficiency, and supply chain transparency.

3. Financial Sustainability Model

As a not-for-profit company, Prokritee's financial structure is designed to maximize social return over private profit.

- **Reinvestment of Surplus:** As a non-profit company, any annual surplus is reinvested directly back into the organization to support its social mission, fund community projects, and provide new training and technical upgrades. This model prioritizes the long-term well-being of the artisan communities.
- **Inventory and Supply Security:** To mitigate production delays caused by climate change (e.g., heavy monsoons delaying sun-drying of materials), Prokritee purchases seasonal raw materials in bulk in advance. This maintains a consistent stock and ensures uninterrupted work and pay for the artisans.

- **Long-Term Buyer Relationships:** The organization works to maintain long-term relationships with its major Fair-Trade buyers (like Ten Thousand Villages and Oxfam), providing a reliable base of annual orders that underpin its operational planning and financial forecasts.

Source/References:

- <https://www.prokritee.com/about-us>
- <https://www.prokritee.com/recycled>
- <https://www.prokritee.com/materials>
- <https://www.prokritee.com/fair-trade>
- <https://www.goodmarket.global/prokritee>

Here is my visual representation of this process posted on Instagram,

https://www.instagram.com/p/DQRCuXIew0r/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==



Here is the visual,

